

GOSSIP OF THE DRAMA FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

Academy of Acting.

James K. Hackett Presents
His View of the Proposed
Subsidized National
Theater.

As an incident to the agitation now in progress toward a subsidized national theater, the following article by James K. Hackett, will have an especial interest. It should be said that Mr. Hackett has long considered this project, and that this statement of his views is made leisurely, and designed particularly for publication in The Times. The article follows:

In expressing my views regarding the proposed Academy of Dramatic Art, I freely admit I have long cherished a special fondness for this commendable project and share in the general interest aroused by so progressive a movement in the direction of a higher education in all that pertains to dramatic art, and the embellishment of that calling which means so much in the future development of the American stage.

For years I have been an earnest advocate of the needs of a university whose curriculum embraces a thorough course of dramatic education, and its tuition in every phase for its development, in preference to the establishment of an endowed theater. In such a university would be laid the basic principle from which in the course of natural evolution would be produced the ideal theater of the nation.

Actors Need Intellectual Support.

The stage needs no defense intellectually, morally, and socially, but it does need recognition in the minds of the intelligent public.

Intelligence is nearly always, in matters pertaining to the present drama, dissatisfied, querulous, and too often takes little or no interest in its actual welfare—just as it does in the general welfare of public affairs; it treats its theater much as it does its politics—lets ignorance do the fighting and voting. At heart the intelligent man knows the stage to be a great teaching factor, and its moral sway—properly directed—wide scope, its intellectual training, its idealistic training, while all else of the sister arts have their endowed schools and conservatories for the higher education of their votaries.

Requirements of Dramatic Education. The university or college of dramatic art, which I so strongly advocate, should be conducted upon broad and enduring lines, and so guarded that its requirements for admission should not be based upon the prospective pupil's former scholastic attainments, but rather upon the proposed student's educational ability to act.

Its curriculum should embrace everything which bears upon the stage and its mimetic drama—its history, traditions, its literature and the many means and modes of expressing the human feelings. This curriculum should be the result of much study of our best and brightest minds. The course of study fixed, its faculty should be composed of the best talent available. The scholastic studies should be limited to those directly connected with our art.

This institution should have the power of conferring upon its graduates a honorary degree, B. D. A., Bachelor of Dramatic Art, which should entitle its holders to recognition in the world of art and letters.

To better explain the conditions of entering upon and finishing such a course, I would like, in my humble way, to explain my method of the operation of such a college.

Choosing Good Seed From Bad.

Instead of approaching Mr. Sothern, Mr. Maudsley, myself, or anybody else whom young Mr. Jones (my supposititious candidate for honors) might happen to know in the profession, and frittering away his talents without any definite knowledge whether he has ability or not, fighting his battle for two or three years with practically no instruction save that which he has been able to assimilate in the perfunctory way, Mr. Jones would go to the university as suggested above and apply for examination. He would be examined solely with a view to his adaptability for the stage. The quality of his voice would be marked as so much; his health, strength, vigor, and physique given an additional credit; his intelligence, his grace, and mobility of countenance; his powers of concentration and application registered at their estimated values—then he would be dismissed.

Upon the commencement of the regular course the markings of Mr. Jones, along with those of the various competitive applicants for the preceding six months or year, as the case might be, should be gone over, and from those examined the faculty could take fifty or a hundred pupils whose markings registered the higher percentages. This favored contingent should then be notified by the proper authorities that the institution had accepted them as worthy material and stood prepared to instruct, board, and house them during the course of prescribed study, which, I am firmly convinced, should cover a period of five years.

The above is rather roughly stated, but will serve to cover the main points. Of Practical Value to the Stage.

The graduate of such an institution would be viewed in a much different light than is the aspiring beginner of today. His degree being one of honor, and accepted in the world of art and letters, would carry much weight with it in this new movement for the betterment of all that pertains to dramatic art.

This school for the benefit of my honored profession has been a hobby of mine for years, and I have enlisted at various times the sympathy and earnest support of many of the leading journals of the country. Two years ago it was

my fortune to enlist as followers in this movement quite a number of the leading men of arts and letters, but the press of my own affairs prevented me from giving the time necessary for the development and furtherance of the project.

The idea of the academy of dramatic art, as proposed at Philadelphia, is an excellent one, but it is not broad enough to meet with my unqualified approval. At the time the matter was discussed it was estimated that \$5,000,000 would be requisite to endow successfully the institution. I must still reiterate that, in my humble opinion, a national school of dramatic art should first be started, and then permit the academy of dramatic art to follow, the natural sequence as an outgrowth. I am firmly of the opinion that in time such a university as I suggest will be established, and when it is, the stage will then receive its proper recognition.

At the present time a lawyer or physician often succeeds because of his profession's standing, but if the actor succeeds, he does it in spite of his profession. With an American college or university of dramatic art, the above would not be the case.

I very much fear the academy, as outlined, affords an opportunity for fostering another group of French immortals, and a subsidized faculty inimical to the true interest at stake.

JAMES K. HACKETT.

Past and Future.

A new element in the local theatrical situation is introduced by the appearance at the Lafayette Square Theater tomorrow night of James K. Hackett, at present the most belligerent of those who oppose the theatrical trust. This is the first tangible sign that Washington is to share the profits of this conflict. If Mr. Hackett paves the way it seems morally certain Mrs. Fiske and Henrietta Crossman will both follow and the Capital will no longer be deprived the fine artistic treat afforded by those excellent actors.

According to talk among theatrical managers, press agents and others who "tell the news from town to town"—as the tinkers of Robin Hood express it—the opposition to the trust is to be wonderfully strong.

They report that Mr. Mansfield, Mr. Irving, Miss Marlowe, Mr. Miller, Mrs. Fiske and Miss Crossman are only the most prominent names on the roll and that many other standard actors are already in line. There is a story, often denied and as often confirmed, that David Belasco has joined the anti-trust managers and will thus bring Mrs. Leelle Carter, Dave Warfield and his other stars either into the fold or out of it, according to your point of view. Finally, it seems to be assumed that the Liebler company, splendidly managed and decidedly powerful, is allied with the opposition, a circumstance which would mean the enrollment of Ezra Kendall, James O'Neill, Kyle Bellew, Eleanor Robson and Eleonora Duse with the revolutionaries.

Grating the truth of all this, the opponents of The Trust have a fine start.

In any event Mr. Hackett is proving the ability of a good actor to stand alone, and Washington will, welcome him heartily tomorrow night as the David who is fighting the Goliath of the stage. His play has been much commended elsewhere.

The National presents "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," a musical play, which the critics of other cities pronounce the long-lost creation, with consistent plot, picturesque and reasonable costumes, worthy, bright music and capable enactment. If all this is true, a successful engagement is assured to matter how fine the weather of Easter week.

Alice Fischer makes her bow locally at the Columbia. Her comedy is called "Mrs. Jack," and has been elsewhere a pronounced success. Here, as in the case of "When Johnny," etc., everything depends on the ability of the company to substantiate the favorable criticisms received at other hands. If Miss Fischer can "make good" as completely as her press agent has done in the story printed elsewhere on this page, she need have no fears.

Chase's will present a bill which includes McIntyre and Heath, Nat M. Willis, and other good attractions.

The Academy follows "Happy Hooligan" with "A Desperate Chance."

The two burlesque houses present vaudeville. It should be said clearly that "A Desperate Chance" is an unhappy and ill-guided venture as "The James Boys in Missouri." In this case, however, it is not the James boys who are canonized, but two brothers who terrorized helpless women and children in the vicinity of Pittsburgh and then ran away with the wife of a jail warden. This play is said to have been the greatest melodramatic success of the year in Pittsburgh, which speaks mightily in for Pittsburgh.

Last week's attractions wrestled with Holy Week. In the light of that obstacle their comparative success was a distinct credit.

"Robin Hood" drew as well as it always does. It is a fine opera, and when sung by young voices, as it was sung last week, it deserves all the support it can get. But "Maid Marian" is not at all in the same class.

"A Chinese Honeymoon" has worn itself out in Washington.

Chase's and the Lafayette did well. Holy Week is past now, the end of the season is nigh, and the tide of theatrical travel is now turned homeward.

Lafayette—James K. Hackett in "The Crisis."

In the presentation of Winston Churchill's play, "The Crisis," at the Lafayette Square Opera House, tomorrow night, James K. Hackett will offer what has been spoken of elsewhere as the most attractive program of his stellar career. The play is said to be a good illustration of his endeavors as a manager, in so far as it is proof that he is willing to sink all desire for stellar brilliancy when it seems to endanger



A Creation From "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

the ensemble of the play presented. It is said that in the dramatization Mr. Hackett urged Mr. Churchill not to attempt to make the part of Stephen Bria assume more prominence than it had enjoyed in the original story, but to preserve all the characters with the same relative prominence as in the book.

The result of this seems to have been something superior to the ordinary book-play, and incidentally to have placed Mr. Hackett in a position to show his ability for quiet, intense, but self-restrained acting, which none other of his previous roles allowed. As the cool headed Northerner, Stephen Bria, opposed to the impetuous, fiery Southern people, whom he loved, but not their opinion, he is credited with a dignity and repose which years of "Prisoner of Zenda," "Rupert of Hentzau," and "Don Caesar de Bezan" would not suggest. In Philadelphia, New York, Buffalo, Boston, and Chicago he was given great praise for this phase of his work, and the play was spoken of as a good piece of dramatic writing.

The consensus of opinion has been that no better dramatic form of a published novel has ever been placed upon the stage, and that no star of modern days, at least, has shown himself so willing to partially subordinate his own character in the play for the purpose of giving.

The mountings and stage investiture carried by Mr. Hackett for his production of "The Crisis" have been universally commended.

Mr. Hackett's engagement is for the six nights commencing Monday, April 13, with matinees on Wednesday and Saturday only. The reservation of seats is already quite large, and premeags an ovation for the distinguished player.

National—"When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

The much-lauded patriotic comic opera, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," described as being neither English, German, nor French, but real American, in theme, workmanship, and atmosphere, will begin a week's engagement at the National Theater tomorrow night.

The opera is by Stanislaus Stange and Julian Edwards, authors of "Dolly Varden." "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" has been described as the best and only true American comic opera ever produced.

Among other numbers in the opera that have become enormously popular are: "Just Marry the Man and Be Merry," "Good-By, Yankee," "My Honeyuckle Girl," and "Years Touch Not the Heart." The gem of the opera, however, is said to be "Katie, My Southern Rose." The opera is reputed to have more action, more popular songs and more picturesque mise-en-scene than any musical piece that has been produced in years. The story possesses a most interesting military dash, but its main interests are humorous, with an attractive sentimental vein in three splendidly developed love stories between a Northern general and a Southern widow, and two Union officers and a Northern and a Southern girl. The company includes Homer Land, Lucile Saunders, Maurice Darcy, Julia Gifford, and Zettie Kennedy, and other talented people.

Columbia—Alice Fischer in "Mrs. Jack."

"Mrs. Jack," the comedy by Grace Livingston Furness, will be seen for the first time in this city at the Columbia Theater tomorrow night, with Alice Fischer in the title role. This new star has met with unusual success and comes here with the prestige of a run of 100 nights at Wallack's and the Victoria Theaters in New York.

In the title role of "Mrs. Jack," Miss Fischer has a congenial vehicle for the

display of her whole-souled personality and unique qualifications as an actor.

Miss Furness' comedy is brightly written, the dialogue being so snappy and smart as to win much applause. Miss Fischer makes of Mrs. Jack a fascinating comic figure. She carries off the part with a wealth of vivacity and a dash of humor that holds her audience fast. Miss Fischer has been surrounded with a capable company of comedians, including Lotta Linthicum, Jacques Kruger, Alice Leigh, James Carey, Myrtle Vinson, Frank Mayne, Beatrice Bonner, Frank Matheson, Charles M. Collins, Edith Finkle, George Schaefer, Mary E. Post, George Fox, and E. L. Clark.

Mask and Wig Club in "Sir Robinson Crusoe."

The initial performance of the season by the Mask and Wig Club of the University of Pennsylvania, which comes to Washington on Monday, April 20, at the Lafayette Square Opera House, occurred yesterday afternoon and evening in Atlantic City. For many years this organization has furnished on Easter Saturday the society event of the gay season at the Jersey resort, at which time the fashionables of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington are enjoying the delightful spring days along the famous boardwalk.

This week the "Wiggers" will present "Sir Robinson Crusoe" at Nixon & Zimmerman's Chestnut Street Opera House in Philadelphia.

Those who enact the principal roles in the production are nearly all new members this year. It is an invariable rule of the organization that none but strictly bona fide undergraduates of the university may participate in the annual productions, and for that reason the graduation of several "squares" last season left many vacancies to be filled.

The new musical travesty is in two acts, the first upon De Long Green's private yacht, and the second at the

Country Club of Philadelphia. Automobile girls, golf maids, and sailor lassies, with chic French maids, will carol the bright and merry choruses, and a corps de ballet of silk-tighted chorus "girls" scintillates and sparkles in spite of tenor, baritone, and bass voices. Among the new musical numbers are many novelties. A burlesque upon Belasco's "Du Barry," together with a new song and chorus, "Ma Merry Maisie," and a travesty on the Cafe Chantant dance from "The Silver Slipper," are novel features.

The performance is to be a benefit for the Washington Diet Kitchen, a worthy local charity.

Orpheum Show at Chase's.

The Orpheum Show will entertain at Chase's all this week with one of the finest assemblages of polite vaudeville novelties ever witnessed in this city. McIntyre and Heath in "The Georgia Minstrels," head the bill. The second feature will be Nat M. Willis, the comedian with a predilection for nomads, which he has gratified with his latest specialty "The Son of Rest," a bit of nonsense interspersed with characteristic song satires, Nick Long and Idalene Cotton, formerly of the Augustin Daly Musical Comedy company, will play "The Critic and the Lady" in which Miss Cotton will introduce her imitations of Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Fiske, and also her burlesque of "Camille" in Italian. She will also reproduce the intensely dramatic climax of "Hearts Affaire," the rights to which she has secured from the author, Mrs. Haines. Rawson and June, Australian boomerang throwers, will present a novelty. The Meloni trio of Parisian street singers and instrumentalists, Mignonne Kohn, chanteuse and danseuse, Galetti's Monkey comedians and Albert Kartell, the noted foreign gymnast, complete the list of offerings.

Academy—"A Desperate Chance."

"A Desperate Chance" will be the attraction at the Academy this week. Theodore Kremer, the author, has taken for the foundation of the play the life, trial and escape of the famous Biddle brothers, and the result is said to be a play full of thrilling situations, exciting climaxes and with a love story that appeals to all.

The play is said to abound in thrilling situations and exciting climaxes. Its intense plot does not serve, however, to eliminate comedy and there is much to amuse in the text. A capable company has been secured and the Washington engagement of the piece promises to be successful.

Empire—"Southern Enchantment."

"Southern Enchantment," a comedy in three acts, will be the bill this week at the Empire Theater. The presenting company is known as "The Smart Set" and includes a large chorus and a group of comedians including Ernest Hogan, Billy McCallain, Henry Jackson Norris, James Corbell, Margaret Jordan and Marion Henry.

The comedy is said to be unusually bright and is full of popular and attractive musical compositions.

Washington Symphony Concert Tonight.

The Washington Symphony concert this evening at the National Theater at 8:15 o'clock, promises to bring out one of the largest audiences in attendance at concerts of this excellent local organization.

Prices will be within the reach of all, and the program to be given is of an unusually attractive character. Mr. De Koven has exerted himself in the selection of the various numbers to find music which will elevate the taste and at the same time be pleasing. This happy combination has resulted in a successful evening's entertainment which cannot fail. The public likes good music. Heavy music is not necessarily meant, but music can be pleasing to the popular taste and be light and meritorious simultaneously.

Washington should be proud of the Washington Symphony Orchestra, for it has persevered amid many difficulties. The financial affairs have improved with each concert and it is to be hoped that Mr. De Koven will continue his earnest efforts next season.

The program will be as follows: Overture, "Merry Wives of Windsor"; Nivala; prologue, "I Pagliacci"; Leoncavallo; Peer Gynt Suite, op. 46, Grieg.

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NEW NATIONAL THEATER - Last Concert of Season

Washington Symphony Orchestra

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PROGRAM:

- I. Overture, "Merry Wives of Windsor".....Nicolas
- II. Prologue, from "Pagliacci".....Mr. Wiley.
- III. Peer Gynt Suite, Op. 46.....Grieg
- IV. Harp Solo.....Selected Mr. Aptommas.
- V. (a) March Espagnole.....De Koven
- (b) Artist's Life Waltz.....Strauss
- VI. Torreador's Song.....Carmen Mr. Wiley.
- VII. (a) Ballet Music, Tschaikowsky
- (b) Lohengrin—Prelude Act III

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harp solo, selected, Mr. Aptommas; (a) "Marche Espagnole," De Koven; (b) "Kunstlerleben Walzer," Strauss; "Torreador's Song," "Carmen," Mr. Wiley; (a) ballet music, Tschaikowsky; (b) "Lohengrin," prelude to act 3, Wagner.

Trying War-Time Costumes.

The Hoop-Skirts in "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

In the new Stange and Edwards comic opera, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," that Manager F. C. Whitney has produced, there are several features worthy of more than passing attention. There is an atmosphere of patriotism in theme and music which is refreshing and stimulating, and in the matter of costumes a distinctly novel and wholly charming fashion has been found in the exaggerated crinolines of forty years ago.

For the first time in the history of the National Theater the stage has been found too small to accommodate the people used in an operatic production. The stage in itself is one of the largest in the country, and in times past has been found plenty big enough to take care of productions in which several hundred people have been employed. But the Whitney Opera Company and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" will tax the capacity of the stage beyond comfort.

One Girl in Space for Four.

This is not because of the number of people employed, although there are almost 300, including the soldiers used in this opera, but it is the costumes, the old-fashioned hoopskirt crinolines of a



Alice Fischer in "Mrs. Jack."

generation ago that the thirty-odd young women in the company wear. That is the cause of all the trouble. Not only do the girls themselves find hard work in manipulating their voluminous skirts, but Stage Director Holbrook has been at his wits' end to find places for them during the times they are not on the stage. Ordinarily half a dozen girls can get behind one "flat," but it is different with a girl inside of a crinoline. She takes as much room as half a dozen girls would in scantier costumes or tights.

The girls are always in the way, almost as much in their own way as they are in everybody's else. Not more than two or three of them can get into any one dressing room at a time, so the apparently simple method of relegating

them to the rooms in order to relieve the congested state of affairs is impossible.

In a Moving Prison Cell.

The sight of half a dozen of them backed up against the wall with their skirts flattened out at the back and all billowed out at the front as a principal hurries by to make an entrance is amusing and at times grotesque. Another odd sight is to see one of the girls trying to fasten her shoe ribbons or trying to get close enough to another to lace the back of her waist.

"The first day that we had to put on those hoops at rehearsal," said one of the young women after the first rehearsal, "we struggled and tried all sorts of expedients, and stood around as if we were dressed in elder barrels. After about an hour of practicing with them, we got so discouraged that we were on the verge of tears. Every time one of us would move, we'd bump into another hoopskirt, until it seemed that the very air must simply be filled with whirling, ballooning hoopskirts."

"When my cue came to sit down, I found that I just couldn't do it, that was all there was about it. The stage manager tried to show me how. Then he went and got a hoopskirt himself and experimented. When he sat down the thing flew up over his head and we had to rush to his rescue or he would have been smothered to death, I really believe."

Reviving an Old Accomplishment.

"At last he found a way of shifting the frames so that we might sit down decorously and were all told to take our hoopskirts home and rehearse with them until we could handle them as gracefully as we would a bathing suit."

"When it came to Monday night—that opening that we had all been dreaming about—we were afraid that we might forget the trick and five minutes before the curtain went up, the audience might have seen some thirty young women, could they but have been behind the scenes, jumping around, swinging, sitting down, waiting and acting in a perfectly delicious manner. They were just taking the finishing touches of their hoopskirt training."

"Frightened? Of course, we were frightened. When it comes to a first night, professionals, no matter how long they have been on the stage, are as nervous as the most hysterical amateur. There are so many things to go wrong and it takes so few things to go wrong to bring disaster. But with hoopskirts! You may be sure we were frightened."

From Choir Loft to Stage.

How a Clergyman Thrust Alice Fischer On the Stage.

Alice Fischer, who was made a star in a single night last September, by one appearance as "Mrs. Jack," in which part she comes to the Columbia tomorrow night, was thrust into the dramatic profession by a clergyman, who brought her to New York from her home in Terre Haute, Ind., to satisfy himself and his congregation that she was properly started in a dramatic school. "In every town," says Miss Fischer's press agent, "or rather in every church circle in every town, there is always one young woman who is known as the 'moving spirit.' She is usually president of the Y. P. S. C. E.; she teaches a class in Sunday school; she most rudely bawls off from ten to fourteen-year-old boys, as a rule; she superintends all the Children's Day exercises, teaching the precocious members of the infant class little pieces, thereby doing great work toward developing early vanity. She always recites, sings, and plays the Sun-

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2. Walter's Prize Song....."Meistersinger".....Wagner
(Mr. Ben Davies.)
3. Symphony No. 5.....Beethoven
4. Group of songs { a "Mondnacht."
b. Du bist wie eine Blume. }.....Schumann
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5. Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2.....Liszt
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